

QUALIFICATION STANDARDS OPERATING MANUAL

Qualification Standard for Supervisory Positions

This qualification standard prescribes minimum requirements for supervisory positions at grades GS-15 and below and provides guidance for evaluating the qualifications of candidates for such positions.

Many supervisory positions have specific subject-matter knowledge and skill requirements that candidates must also meet. Normally, such subject-matter requirements are contained in the qualification standard appropriate to the position to be filled.

Supervisory positions may be staffed with persons who have not had specific supervisory experience, provided they have the essential supervisory or managerial aptitudes. For example, to meet future staffing needs for supervisory positions, some organizations may identify a number of candidates with supervisory potential and provide appropriate training for them. Such training is encouraged either before or at the earliest possible time after individuals are selected to fill supervisory positions. The satisfactory completion of supervisory training is to be given appropriate weight in evaluating the overall supervisory or managerial abilities of candidates for positions covered by this standard.

SUPERVISORY OR MANAGERIAL ABILITIES

Candidates must have demonstrated in their work experience or training that they possess, or have the potential to develop, the qualities of successful supervision, as listed under the appropriate category below.

The qualities listed for first level supervisory positions and for positions at second and higher levels are not mutually exclusive. For example, some first level supervisory positions may also require certain of the abilities described for second and higher level supervisors, or the potential to develop these abilities. Decisions as to the appropriate minimum supervisory qualities should be based on actual job requirements.

For first level supervisory positions, ability to:

- Assign to and review work of subordinates, train and work effectively with subordinates from a variety of backgrounds and with different levels/areas of training.

- Accomplish the quality and quantity of work expected within set limits of cost and time.
- Plan own work and carry out assignments effectively.
- Communicate with others effectively both orally and in writing in working out solutions to problems or questions relating to the work.
- Understand and further management goals as these affect day-to-day work operations.
- Develop improvements in or design new work methods and procedures.

For supervisory positions at second and higher levels:

In addition to the abilities required for first level supervisory positions, candidates for supervisory positions at second and higher levels must possess, or have the potential to develop, the ability to:

- Deal effectively with individuals or groups representing widely divergent backgrounds, interests, and points of view.
- Plan and adjust work operations to meet changing or emergency program or production requirements within available resources and with minimum sacrifice of quantity or quality of work.
- Establish program objectives or performance goals and assess progress toward their achievement.
- Coordinate and integrate the work activities and resources of several organizational segments or of several different projects.
- Analyze organizational and operational problems and develop timely and economical solutions.
- Represent the activity both within and outside the organization or agency to gain support for the agency's program goals.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

The attributes listed below are important to success in supervisory or managerial positions at all supervisory

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levels. Accordingly, candidates for all supervisory positions must demonstrate all of the following personal qualities:

- Objectivity and fairness in judging people on their ability, and situations on the facts and circumstances;
- Capacity to adjust to change, work pressures, or difficult situations without undue stress;
- Willingness to consider new ideas or divergent points of view; and
- Capacity to "see the job through."

The skills, abilities, and personal attributes described above may have been demonstrated in many types of either supervisory or nonsupervisory work assignments. The following examples show the kinds of assignments in which candidates may have acquired or demonstrated some of the skills and abilities identified earlier as necessary for supervisory positions.

For first level supervisors, assignments:

- That involved providing guidance and training to new employees.
- As a "project or team leader" that involved coordinating and integrating the work of others into a completed work product.
- That required the candidate to work closely with others to resolve problems, coordinate activities, or gain acceptance of a product or procedure.
- As a "troubleshooter" or source of advice to others regarding the work of the unit or organization.
- That involved devising new work methods and procedures or improvements in existing work practices, and getting the cooperation of employees in applying the new methods and practices.

For second and higher level supervisors, assignments:

- That required the candidate to devise ways to accommodate work operations to new and changing programs or requirements such as studies of work practices and procedures, staffing and budget requirements, and similar matters.

- That included extensive work with other Federal organizational units, or with State, local, or private activities, and that required the candidate to represent and explain program or project goals, or to coordinate and complete projects.
- That involved one or more of the following complications: (1) controversial issues, i.e., disagreements on program requirements, policy positions, or operating procedures; (2) strong public interest; or (3) last minute changes requiring extensive coordination.
- To positions, task forces, planning, or special study groups that involved substantive work in (1) planning for new programs; (2) reviewing program operations to develop or improve methods, procedures, or controls; or (3) bringing about major changes in program operations and procedures when such assignments have required exploring the management, organizational, and program issues involved, and appraising alternative courses of action.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Where the nature of the position to be filled warrants it, the technical requirements should be interpreted broadly. For example, if the position involves supervision of more than one kind of work, and no one kind clearly predominates, candidates may meet the minimum technical requirements if their backgrounds clearly show that they possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed in the occupation to which the position is classified, or in two or more of the kinds of work supervised.

For many positions, supervisory or program management skills are more significant to success than technical expertise in a particular subject-matter field. In such situations, undue emphasis should not be placed on technical skills. The total background of the candidate should demonstrate strong affirmative evidence that he or she:

1. Has the necessary level of supervisory or managerial skills, abilities, and attributes to perform the work successfully; and
2. Possesses the necessary level of professional or technical competence for the supervisory position being filled.

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SUGGESTED METHOD FOR ANALYZING JOB REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATING CANDIDATES

The guidance that follows provides a method for determining job requirements and assessing candidates' potential for supervisory positions. It is not necessary to use this method; any part may be modified and adapted as necessary. However, the modified method must result in an identification of job requirements and an appraisal of candidates that is at least equivalent in scope to that which would be achieved through the use of the following method.

DETERMINING JOB REQUIREMENTS

The procedure outlined for determining the requirements of supervisory positions is designed to assure that the elements essential to success in a particular job are given appropriate weight in the evaluation of candidates. These determinations need not be made on an individual position basis. For those supervisory positions that are substantially alike, decisions regarding job requirements can be applied to all like positions. Further, these requirements, once established, need not be revised until the basic characteristics of the position change.

All supervisory positions share some common requirements, such as the ability to get work done through others. However, the particular knowledge, skills, and abilities essential to supervisory success vary in kind and in importance from one supervisory position to another. These variations reflect differences in agency programs and operations, such as in (1) the kind of work operations supervised, (2) the place of the position in the management hierarchy, and (3) the goals and objectives of higher management.

1. *The kind of work operations supervised or programs managed*

Many supervisory positions require specialized subject-matter knowledge and experience. The depth and variety of this knowledge must be established to determine the degree to which the knowledge is essential, and the relative weight that should be given to this knowledge requirement in the overall appraisal of candidates.

2. *The role and level of the position in the managerial hierarchy*

The role of the position in the managerial hierarchy may be a clue to the relative importance of job requirements. All supervisory positions demand considerable skill in interpersonal relationships in guiding and controlling day-to-day work operations, and dealing with employees supervised. However, for supervisory positions at the higher levels, such demands as the ability to translate management goals and objectives into well-coordinated and controlled work operations, or the ability to establish and monitor production or performance priorities may assume additional importance.

3. *The goals and objectives of higher management, as they relate to the activities to be supervised*

Management's expectations play an important part in determining the supervisor's role in the total work effort of the organization. These expectations are reflected in the amount and kind of authority and responsibility delegated to the position which, in turn, affect the skills and abilities required to do the work successfully. To be sure that these expectations are clearly understood and taken into account in evaluating candidates, it is highly desirable that the management official directly responsible for the activity in which the position exists participate in identifying the qualifications required.

U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

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